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# Clipped Wings

ON AN AUGUST MORNING IN 1942, ENGLAND AWOKE TO THE HEARTENING NEWS THAT CANADIAN TROOPS HAD SET FOOT IN OCCUPIED EUROPE. THE GALLANT RAID IN STRENGTH ON GERMAN FORTIFIED DIEPPE WAS DESIGNED AS A REHEARSAL FOR THE MIGHTY ALLIED INVASION THAT WOULD ONE DAY BURST UPON THE ENSLAVED CONTINENT.



BOLDLY CONCEIVED AND BRAVELY FOUGHT, INVALUABLE LESSONS IN THE GRIM ART OF BEACH ASSAULT WERE LEARNED AT DIEPPE.

## Chapter 1. *Fighter Pilot*

IN THE BATTLE-TORN SKIES ABOVE DIEPPE, OTHER TOUGH LESSONS WERE BEING LEARNED. THE NEW GERMAN FIGHTER PLANE, THE FOCKE-WULF 190, WAS TESTING THE WELL-ESTABLISHED SPITFIRE TO THE UTMOST.

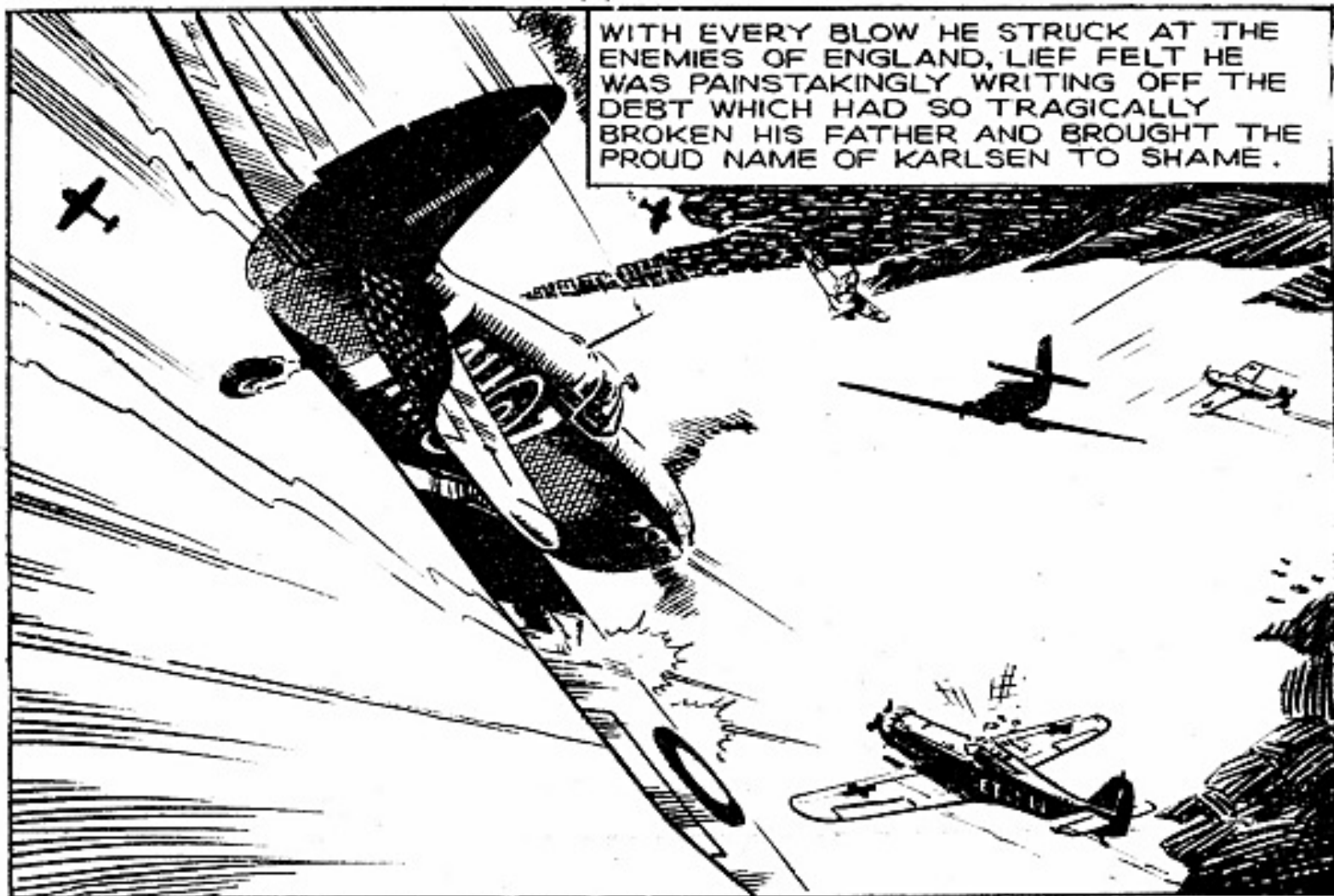


NO PILOT WAS MORE AWARE OF THE DEADLY QUALITIES OF THE FOCKE-WULF THAN SQUADRON-LEADER LIEF KARLSEN. A NORWEGIAN BY BIRTH, AN R.A.F. FIGHTER-PILOT BY CHOICE, HE HAD BEEN THRICE DECORATED FOR INSPIRED LEADERSHIP.

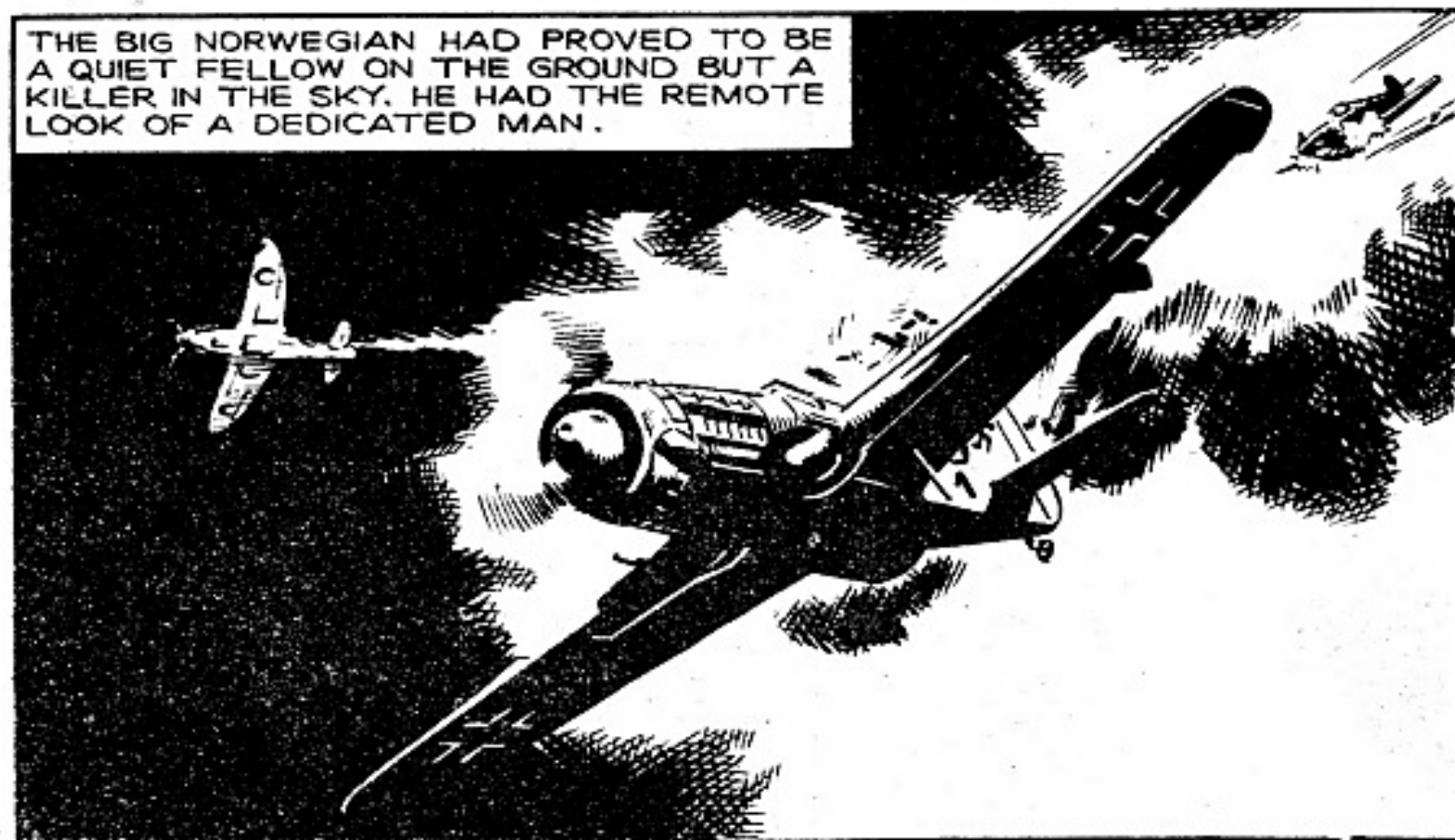


## Clipped Wings

WITH EVERY BLOW HE STRUCK AT THE ENEMIES OF ENGLAND, LIEF FELT HE WAS PAINSTAKINGLY WRITING OFF THE DEBT WHICH HAD SO TRAGICALLY BROKEN HIS FATHER AND BROUGHT THE PROUD NAME OF KARLSEN TO SHAME.



THE BIG NORWEGIAN HAD PROVED TO BE A QUIET FELLOW ON THE GROUND BUT A KILLER IN THE SKY. HE HAD THE REMOTE LOOK OF A DEDICATED MAN.



WITH THE SAME COOL SKILL, LIEF KARLSEN DISENGAGED HIS SQUADRON FROM THE MILLING COMBAT, TO LEAD THEM BACK TO THEIR BASE AT WIDDENHALL IN KENT. THERE, A KNOT OF NEWS-HUNGRY PRESSMEN EAGERLY AWAITED THE TOUCH-DOWN.



LIEF HAD LONG SINCE LEARNED TO ENDURE THE ATTENTIONS OF THE PRESS. BUT THIS TIME HE FROWNEO AS WALTER BROOKS OF "THE EVENING GAZETTE" SUDDENLY FUMBLING FOR A DISTANT MEMORY...

LET ME SEE -- WASN'T THERE ANOTHER LIEF KARLSEN, MANY YEARS AGO -- SOMETHING TO DO WITH AN AWFUL AIR DISASTER .... ?



THE WORDS WERE HARDLY UTTERED WHEN KARLSEN'S HUGE FIST HAD BROOKS PINNED BY THE COAT. THE NORWEGIAN'S FACE HAD CLOUDED LIKE THUNDER...

BE SILENT! NO MORE QUESTIONS!

I -- I ONLY MENTIONED...



KARLSEN STRODE OFF, LEAVING AN AMAZED GROUP OF PRESSMEN LOOKING AFTER HIM...



SOMETHING ABOUT AN AIR DISASTER, WAS IT, BROOKS?

YES, IT WAS THE D-FORTY-FOUR! YOU REMEMBER, THE BIG BRITISH AIRSHIP. SHOCKING AFFAIR--HAPPENED BACK IN THE 'TWENTIES.

THERE, FOR A WHILE, THE MATTER RESTED, FOR REPORTS OF THE FAILURE AT DIEPPE WERE COMING IN AND THE PRESSMEN'S ATTENTION WAS TURNED ELSEWHERE. SUMMER GAVE WAY TO AUTUMN AND WINTER. AIR ACTIVITY WAS CONFINED TO "RHUBARBS"--DARTING ATTACKS ON ENEMY COASTAL TARGETS.



WHO THE HECK'S THAT? I THOUGHT ALL PLANES WERE GROUNDED!

IT'S KARLSEN--TAKE MORE THAN A SUB-ZERO TEMPERATURE TO CLIP HIS WINGS.

TO THE BIG NORWEGIAN, INACTION SEEMED INTOLERABLE. ALWAYS HE HAD TO BE AT THE ENEMY AND NOTHING WAS ALLOWED TO BREAK THIS FIERCE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS.

CLOSE UP,  
FALCON TWO...  
WE GO OUT AT  
ZERO FEET!

OKAY,  
FALCON ONE...  
CLOSING UP!

SOON, THE PEACEFUL, SNOW-MANTLED FIELDS OF ENGLAND GAVE WAY TO THE RACKET OF ENEMY COASTAL GUNS. COOLLY CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE FLAMING MUZZLES, KARLSEN ATTACKED HEADLONG.

SPITFEUER!

BUT ON THIS ILL-STARRED MORNING, THE HURRICANE OF FLAK THAT SWEEPED UP TO MEET THE BRITISH PLANES WAS ON TARGET...

A HIT!

THE SWINE IS DAMAGED!



BY BRUTE STRENGTH, KARLSEN DRAGGED THE STRICKEN SPITFIRE OUT OF ITS DIVE. BUT THE END WAS NEAR...

IT IS NO GOOD, FALCON TWO--MUST CRASH LAND! OVER AND OUT!



HE WAS DRAGGED FROM THE WRECKAGE, SEMI-CONSCIOUS AND WEAKLY CURSING HIS JUBILANT CAPTORS.

HA --- A STAFFEL-FUEHRER.

JA, THIS BIRD ROOSTS ON A HIGH PERCH!



FOR LIEF KARLSEN, THE REAL MEANING OF CAPTIVITY WAS NOT TRULY FELT UNTIL THE GREY DAY WHEN THE GATES OF A PRISON CAMP CREAKED OPEN IN GRIM WELCOME.



HAUPTMANN BORGEHEIM OF THE NAZI COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE SERVICE QUESTIONED THE NORWEGIAN PILOT BUT WITH LITTLE SUCCESS.



THE NAZI SCOWLED AND THERE WAS A HINT OF STEEL IN HIS VOICE ...



## Chapter 2. Break Out

IMPATIENT OF CONFINEMENT, LIEF KARLSEN TOOK PRISON LIFE HARD AND IT WAS SOON CLEAR TO OTHER PRISONERS THAT ESCAPE WAS ALWAYS IN HIS MIND. ONE MORNING, HE WAS APPROACHED BY THE EVER-SCHEMING FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT BRUCE VINING ...

SIX OF US ARE PLANNING AN ESCAPE. YOU CAN JOIN US -- PROVIDING YOU CAN SUPPLY THE ONLY THINGS WE LACK. YOU MUST HAVE A SILK MAP AND ALSO ONE OF THOSE BUTTON COMPASSES.

MAYBE I HAVE -- BUT I MUST KNOW MORE OF YOUR PLAN.

AT FIRST RELUCTANTLY, VINING WAS FINALLY OBLIGED TO SHOW THE INSISTENT KARLSEN THAT THERE WAS A FEASIBLE CHANCE OF ESCAPE.

WE WERE TUNNELLING UNDER THE STOVE WHEN WE STRUCK AN OLD FIELD SEWER. IT'LL LEAD OUTSIDE THE CAMP FOR SURE.

MM! SOUNDS GOOD! I'D LIKE TO JOIN YOU!



WITH HOPE ALIVE ONCE MORE, LIEF KARLSEN SAW THE ESCAPE COMMITTEE, A BODY OF SENIOR OFFICERS. HE WAS ABLE TO SUPPLY THE SILK MAP AND THE TINY COMPASS DISGUISED AS A BUTTON, WHICH THE GERMANS HAD NOT DISCOVERED.

THAT'S FAIR ENOUGH. YOU CAN TELL VINING HE CAN GO AHEAD -- AND GOOD LUCK, KARLSEN.

THANK YOU, SIR.



THE BREAK-OUT WAS PLANNED FOR THE FOLLOWING NIGHT. THEN ON THE VERY EVE OF THE ATTEMPT, THE GAUNT SINISTER FIGURE OF HAUPTMANN BORGEHEIM FROZE EVERYONE TO WARINESS.

I WILL SPEAK WITH YOU, VINING... AND ALSO KARLSEN. ALL OTHERS LEAVE THE ROOM.



A COLD SMILE PLAYED AROUND THE GERMAN'S SALLOW FEATURES AS IF HE WERE HARBOURING SOME CYNICAL JOKE.

IT IS ABOUT YOUR FATHER, KARLSEN. WE HAVE DISCOVERED THE SCANDALOUS PART HE PLAYED IN THE BRITISH AIRSHIP DISASTER IN NINETEEN-TWENTY-TWO...



KARLSEN FELT BRUCE VINING STIFFEN AT HIS SIDE AS BORGEHEIM WENT ON UNHURRIEDLY ...

I THINK MY STORY WILL INTEREST VINING HERE. PERSONALLY, I FIND THE WHOLE SITUATION INTRIGUING.

NOTHING YOU CAN SAY ABOUT MY FATHER WILL HURT HIM ... HERE.



WITH SLOW RELISH, BORGEHEIM BEGAN TO RELATE THE STORY OF THE D-44 ...



THEY CALLED THE AIRSHIP THE D-FORTY-FOUR. IT WAS DESIGNED TO FLY NON-STOP TO NEW YORK AND BACK... A FEAT SO FAR UNHEARD OF IN BRITISH AVIATION...

"...ABOARD THE D-FORTY-FOUR WERE MEN OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE - CHIEFS OF STAFF, MINISTERS, BRILLIANT SCIENTISTS. AMID SCENES OF WILD ENTHUSIASM, THE AIRSHIP SET COURSE...AND ALL SEEMED WELL."



"...THEN, OVER THE IRISH SEA, THOSE IN THE FORWARD CABIN SAW SMOKE COMING FROM THE MOTOR..."



"...TO THEIR INCREASING ALARM, THEY SAW THAT THE PROPELLER SHAFT WAS GLOWING RED HOT..."



"AMONG THOSE IN THE CABIN WAS A SENIOR ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICER ..."

IF THAT SHAFT SNAPS,  
THE PROPELLER MAY CUT  
RIGHT THROUGH THIS CABIN.  
THE MOTOR MUST BE  
STOPPED!

IT HAS BEEN, SIR...  
BUT IT MAKES NO  
DIFFERENCE. THE PROPELLER  
IS SPINNING FREE!

"SECONDS LATER, THE WORST HAPPENED. THE PROPELLER  
FLEW OFF AND SLICED A HUGE RENT IN THE GASBAG  
ABOVE ..."

GOOD GRIEF!  
THIS IS DISASTROUS!  
TURN BACK!

"BUT ALREADY IT WAS TOO LATE. THE AIRSHIP'S NOSE BEGAN TO CRUMPLE...STEERING WAS LOST... SHE BEGAN TO DIVE. BUT WORSE WAS TO COME. ESCAPING GAS IGNITED AND IN SECONDS THE WHOLE GREAT STRUCTURE WAS A MASS OF FLAMES..."



"IN A FEW TERRIBLE SECONDS, THE D-FORTY-FOUR, WHICH HAD BEEN THE PRIDE OF THE BRITISH AIR FORCE, FELL INTO THE SEA..."



"ONLY ONE MAN SURVIVED THAT DISASTER, THE HIGH RANKING R.A.F. OFFICER. HE SUFFERED TERRIBLE BURNS WHICH LEFT HIM DISFIGURED FOR LIFE."



HAUPTMANN BORGEHEIM EYED THE ANGRY NORWEGIAN WITH EVIDENT RELISH.

ONE MAN SURVIVED, KARLSEN... AND ONE MAN WAS FOUND RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAULTY PROPELLER SHAFT WHICH LED TO THE DISASTER.





ANGRY WORDS POURED FROM THE NORWEGIAN.

IT IS TRUE THAT MY FATHER WAS THE CHIEF ENGINEER. HE BEGGED FOR A FINAL CHECK-OVER BUT IT WAS DENIED HIM. THE NEWS OF THE CRASH BROKE HIS HEALTH... AND WHEN THEY MADE HIM THE SCAPEGOAT IT RUINED HIS LIFE!



NOW BORGEHEIM'S ATTITUDE BECAME SHARPLY BUSINESSLIKE...

AN INTRIGUING SITUATION, EH? THE SON OF THE GUILTY MAN AND THE SON OF THE ONE DISFIGURED SURVIVOR--A FINE STORY FOR OUR ENGLISH BROADCAST TONIGHT!



THE NORWEGIAN WINCED AT BORGEHEIM'S WORDS. TO HAVE HIS FATHER'S NAME SMEARED ONCE MORE OVER THE BRITISH PUBLIC'S MIND FILLED HIM WITH SICK HORROR.

OBVIOUSLY THERE IS A PRICE THAT WOULD BUY OFF THIS BROADCAST.



EXACTLY. THE PRICE IS A LITTLE INFORMATION... SHALL WE SAY THE COMPLETE ORDER OF FIGHTER SQUADRONS IN YOUR GROUP?

LIEF KARLSEN'S ANSWER CAME WITH ALL THE FORCE OF OUTRAGED DECENCY...

AGH!

AS HE FELL, BÖRGEHEIM CRACKED HIS HEAD AGAINST A BUNK-POST AND LAY STILL...

HE'S UNCONSCIOUS!

THEN WE MUST ESCAPE NOW!





TO VINING'S RELIEF, ALL THE ESCAPERS REACHED THE TUNNEL EXIT SAFELY. THEN CAME THE NEXT CRITICAL STAGE, THE DASH FOR COVER.



SUDDENLY, THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT, SO FAR BROKEN ONLY BY THEIR STRAINING BREATH, WAS RENT BY A SPINE-CHILLING WAIL FROM THE CAMP SYREN.



THE RAUCOUS ALARM TOUCHED OFF A BEDLAM OF CONFUSED SHOUTS, COMMANDS AND THE DERISIVE YELLS AND FEET-STAMPING OF THE PRISONERS. THEN CAME THE SAVAGE YELPING OF POLICE TRACKER DOGS.

GO,  
WOLFGANG!

TEAR THE  
ENGLANDERS  
TO PIECES,  
BRUNO!



CLEAR OF THE CAMP, KARLSEN FLUNG HIMSELF DOWN FOR BREATH AND SECONDS LATER, BRUCE VINING JOINED HIM. THEN CAME THE FRENZIED SOUNDS OF DOGS ATTACKING THEIR HAPLESS QUARRIES...

HEAR THAT,  
KARLSEN? THAT  
STUPID MISTAKE  
OF YOURS IS  
SENDING MEN TO  
THEIR DEATH...  
JUST THE WAY  
YOUR FATHER  
DID!

QUIET!  
KEEP  
QUIET!



HAUNTED BY THOSE FEARFUL SOUNDS, KARLSEN AND VINING WORKED CLEAR OF PURSUIT BUT NEVER OF THE RISK OF DISCOVERY.

OF ALL THE MEN TO BE STUCK WITH-- WHY MUST IT BE YOU, KARLSEN?

IF I HADN'T GOT THE MAP AND COMPASS, NO DOUBT YOU'D HAVE LEFT ME LONG AGO.

THAT NIGHT, THE BITTER COLD MADE THEM RISK SHELTERING IN A FARMHOUSE BARN. NEXT MORNING, HOWEVER, LIEF KARLSEN AWOKE TO TWO GRIM DISCOVERIES, ONE THAT BRUCE VINING HAD GONE, AND THE OTHER...

THE SWINE!  
HE'S TAKEN  
MY MAP AND  
COMPASS!

ABANDONED TO A HOSTILE COUNTRY, KARLSEN DRIFTED AIMLESSLY UNTIL HIS BIG FRAME BECAME A GAUNT SHADOW OF ITSELF. THEN ONE NIGHT, THE ENEMY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AS HE WAS EATING RAW CABBAGE IN A FIELD.

ON YOUR FEET, DOG!  
THIS TIME WE'LL CLIP  
YOUR WINGS SHORTER  
STILL!

FOR THE ATTACK ON HAUPTMANN BORGEHEIM, LIEF KARLSEN WAS SENTENCED TO SIXTY DAYS SOLITARY CONFINEMENT. BUT THE MISERY OF THAT DANK CELL DID NOT SEAR HIS MIND AS MUCH AS DID THE THOUGHT OF HIS TREACHEROUS COMPANION.

BY ALL THE GODS / VINING SHALL PAY FOR THIS !

HIS PUNISHMENT FINISHED, KARLSEN WAS TRANSFERRED TO A CASTLE HIGH ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER RHINE. IT WAS A PRISON FROM WHICH NO P.O.W. HAD EVER ESCAPED.



THERE THE NORWEGIAN LANGUISHED WHILE IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE. WINTER PASSED TO SPRING AND THEN TO ANOTHER SUMMER OF HITLER'S WAR.



THEN ONE FATEFUL NIGHT, BRITISH BOMBERS FOLLOWED FROM ON HIGH THE TWISTING SILVER THREAD THAT WAS THE MIGHTY RHINE...



THE TARGET FOR THE LANCASTERS WAS A CONCENTRATION OF BARGES MOORED ON THE RIVER BELOW THE CASTLE-PRISON. THE DEAFENING EXPLOSIONS BROUGHT EVERY PRISONER LEAPING TO HIS NARROW GRILL...



THEN A STICK OF BOMBS FELL OUT OF LINE, SLAMMING AT REGULAR INTERVALS INTO THE RIVER BANKS. THE LAST OF THAT STICK CRASHED DOWN UPON THE PRISON WALLS.



THE ECHOES OF THE EXPLOSION HAD HARDLY CEASED WHEN THROUGH THE GAP IN THE CASTLE WALL SCRAMBLED THE MORE ENTERPRISING AMONG THE PRISONERS, MIRACULOUSLY SET FREE FROM THEIR WRECKED CELLS. WITH THEM WENT LIEF KARLSEN ...



FOLLOWING HIS OWN SHOUTED ADVICE, KARLSEN FLUNG HIMSELF DOWN THE STEEP SLOPE, CARELESS OF LIFE OR LIMB. HE WAS SEEN AND GERMAN BULLETS WHINED ABOUT HIS CAREERING FORM.



CUT AND BRUISED, BUT OTHERWISE UNHURT, KARLSEN GAINED THE RIVER BANK AND SLID INTO THE DARK WATERS. ALREADY HE KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO...

IF I CAN HIDE IN ONE OF THESE BARGES...



IN AN EFFORT TO ESCAPE FURTHER BOMBING, THE FEW SURVIVING BARGES WERE TAKEN IN TOW BY TUGS AND WITHIN THE HOUR, KARLSEN KNEW BLESSED RELIEF AS HIS BARGE HIDING-PLACE GOT UNDER WAY.



ALTHOUGH SUFFERING AGONIES OF CRAMP IN HIS CONFINED HIDEAWAY, KARLSEN WAS HAPPIER THAN HE HAD BEEN FOR MONTHS. BUT WHEN THE BUSY SOUNDS OF A DOCKSIDE CAME TO HIS EARS SOME HOURS LATER, HE KNEW THAT HIS SPELL OF FREEDOM MIGHT BE SHORT-LIVED.



LUCK STILL SMILED ON HIM, HOWEVER. AMONGST THE FORCED LABOUR WHO WERE UNLOADING THE BARGES WAS A QUICK-WITTED FRENCHMAN, EMILE CARTIER.



THE FRENCHMAN CAME CLOSE TO WHERE KARLSEN WAS HIDDEN UNDER PRETEXT OF UNLOADING MORE STORES FROM THE BARGE'S CARGO.

HAVE FAITH IN ME.  
I WILL HELP YOU --  
BUT LATER. NOW KEEP  
OUT OF SIGHT.

THANK  
YOU,  
FRIEND!



THAT NIGHT, LIEF KARLSEN WAS DIRECTED INTO THE ESCAPE ROUTE, A LONG LIFE-LINE OF GALLANT PEOPLE WHO ORGANISED HIS JOURNEY, FIRST TO SWEDEN, THEN TO ENGLAND.

IT DOESN'T SEEM POSSIBLE --  
AFTER SO MANY MONTHS -- TO  
BE UTTERLY AND COMPLETELY  
FREE!



REFRESHED AND CHANGED INTO A NEW UNIFORM, HE WENT TO HIS OLD GROUP HEADQUARTERS TO FIND A NEW MAN IN COMMAND.

I EXPECT YOU'LL FIND MANY THINGS NEW, KARLSEN -- BUT YOU'LL SOON SHAKE DOWN.

CAN I GO BACK TO MY OLD SQUADRON AT WIDDENHALL, SIR?

FOR A MOMENT, AIR VICE-MARSHAL BRANDSEN LOOKED TROUBLED. THEN HIS FACE CLEARED. HE NEVER KNEW THE GRIM PLEASURE WHICH HIS ALMOST APOLOGETIC WORDS GAVE HIS LISTENER...

I CANNOT GIVE YOU BACK YOUR SQUADRON, KARLSEN -- BUT YOU CAN UNDERSTUDY THE PRESENT COMMANDER. HIS NAME IS VINING.

NOT --- NOT BRUCE VINING, SIR?

I BELIEVE IT IS.

CLOSING THE DOOR ON THIS INTERVIEW, KARLSEN HAD THE FEELING THAT FATE WAS BECOMING A LITTLE KINDER...

SO VINING IS AT WIDDENHALL, EH? I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO MEET HIM.

A.V.M.  
BRANDSEN

## Chapter 3. *Return of the Exile*

TO LIEF KARLSEN, THE SIGHT OF R.A.F. WIDDENHALL IN ALL ITS SUMMER GREEN WAS DEEPLY MOVING. IT HAD BECOME A HOME TO HIM ...



I JUST MADE IT BACK TO THIS PLACE AFTER TOO MANY ROUGH OPS EVER TO FORGET IT, PILOT!

THERE YOU ARE, SIR -- WIDDENHALL! RECOGNISE IT?

IN THAT HEARTFELT MOMENT, HE EVEN FORGOT HIS ABIDING GRUDGE AGAINST BRUCE VINING.

AS THEY TOUCHED DOWN ON THE OLD FAMILIAR RUNWAY, THE FIRST HOMECOMING GREETING CAME FROM A WELL-REMEMBERED FIGURE -- FLIGHT LIEUTENANT DICKSON, THE STATION ADJUTANT.

DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU, LIEF!

WONDERFUL TO BE BACK.

THERE'S ONE MAN WON'T BE EXPECTING YOU -- THAT'S SQUADRON LEADER VINING. HE'S ON SHORT LEAVE -- BUT HE'LL BE BACK TONIGHT.



THE NEWS OF KARLSEN'S RETURN WAS SOON ALL OVER THE CAMP. THAT EVENING, THE MEN WHO REMAINED OF HIS OLD SQUADRON, GAVE HIM A RIOTOUS RECEPTION...



HIS MOUTH TWITCHING WITH ANNOYANCE AT THE JOYFUL UPROAR FROM THE BAR, BRUCE VINING STALKED DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR. HIS FACE FROZE IN SHOCKED SURPRISE ...



KARLSEN!

COME IN--  
MY TRUSTY  
FRIEND!

VINING LICKED HIS DRY LIPS.  
HIS HAND CAME OUT IN  
HOLLOW WELCOME ...

LIEF KARLSEN--  
GLAD TO SEE  
YOU!

GLAD TO SEE  
ME? WHO ARE  
YOU KIDDING,  
VINING?



KARLSEN GRABBED HIM BY THE  
FRONT OF HIS IMMACULATE UNIFORM.

LISTEN! THERE ARE  
ONE OR TWO THINGS  
I WANT TO DISCUSS  
WITH YOU -- IN  
PRIVATE!

TAKE YOUR  
HANDS OFF  
ME!



DESPERATELY, VINING STROVE FOR DIGNITY...

I'LL SEE YOU  
IN MY OFFICE,  
KARLSEN -- IN  
THE MORNING!

RIGHT --  
BUT IT WON'T  
HELP YOU!



BUT BY MORNING, KARLSEN'S WRATH  
HAD BECOME TEMPERED BY THE  
PLEASURE OF BEING BACK WITH  
THE SQUADRON. WHEN HE WALKED  
INTO THE SQUADRON COMMANDER'S  
OFFICE, HOWEVER, HE WAS MET BY  
AN ANGRY OUTBURST...

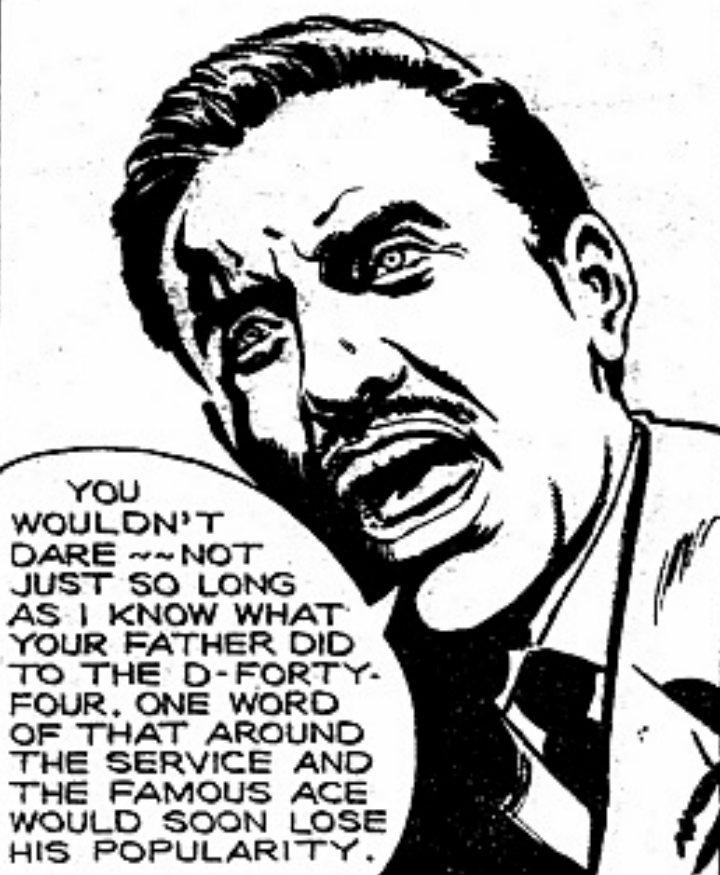
BEFORE YOU SPEAK,  
KARLSEN, I WARN  
YOU THAT ONE  
WRONG MOVE AND  
I'LL HAVE YOU  
POSTED!



AND I'LL WARN  
YOU, VINING, THAT  
I COULD SPREAD  
YOUR ROTTEN  
TRICK ON ME ALL  
OVER COMMAND!

VINING GLARED AT THE BIG  
NORWEGIAN...

YOU  
WOULDN'T  
DARE -- NOT  
JUST SO LONG  
AS I KNOW WHAT  
YOUR FATHER DID  
TO THE D-FORTY-  
FOUR. ONE WORD  
OF THAT AROUND  
THE SERVICE AND  
THE FAMOUS ACE  
WOULD SOON LOSE  
HIS POPULARITY.



NEITHER NOTICED THAT DICKSON, THE ADJUTANT, WAS STANDING IN THE DOORWAY. AS HE HURRIEDLY WITHDREW, DICKSON COULD NOT HELP OVERHEARING KARLSEN'S FINAL WORDS.

YOU JUST MENTION MY FATHER TO ANYONE... AND I'LL KILL YOU!

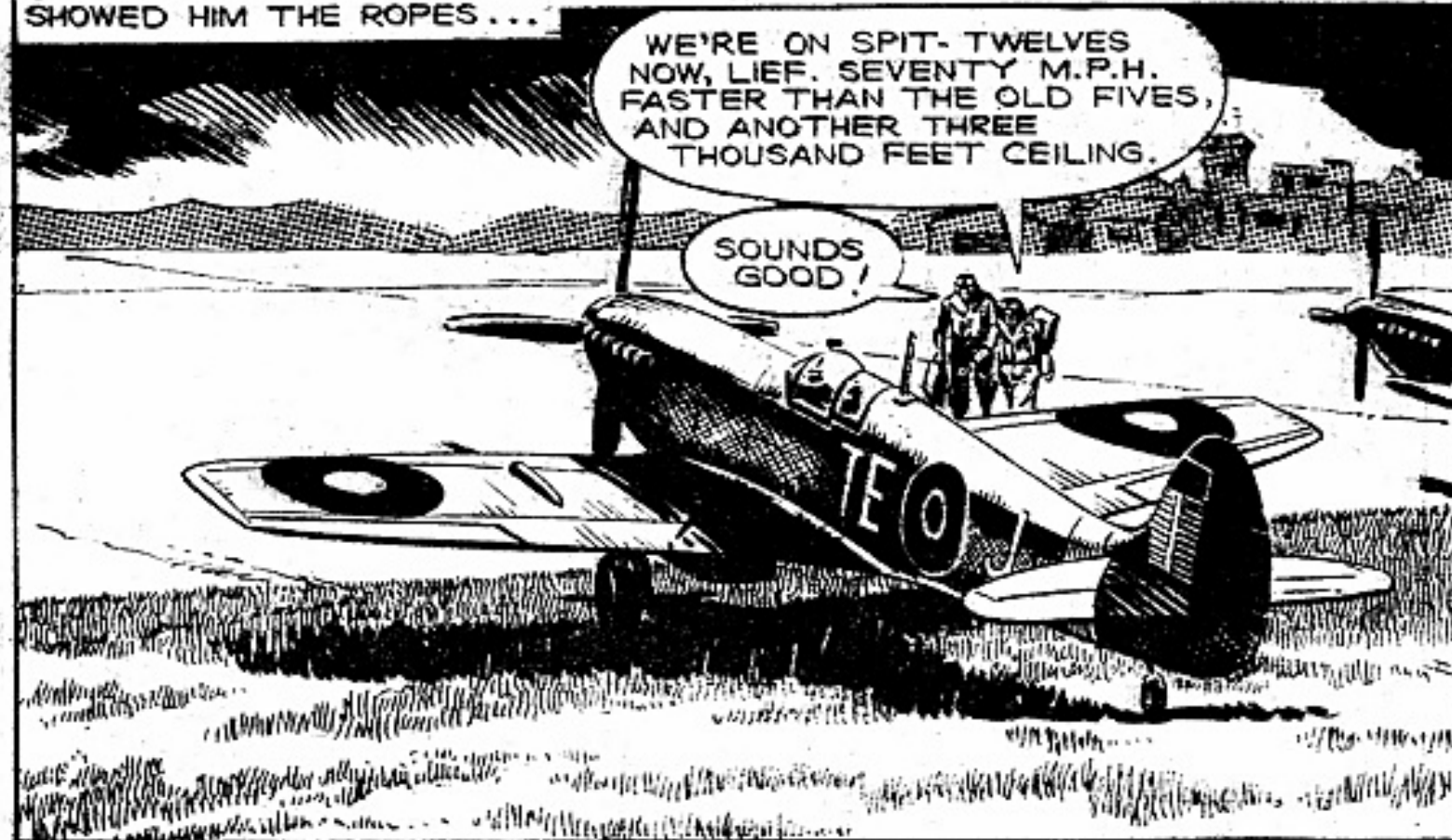
GET OUT OF MY OFFICE!



AFTER THAT ENCOUNTER, THERE WAS AN UNEASY, SMOULDERING TRUCE BETWEEN THE PAIR OF THEM. LIEF KARLSEN ONCE MORE TOOK UP OPERATIONAL FLYING AND ONE OF THE OLD MEMBERS OF THE SQUADRON SHOWED HIM THE ROPES...

WE'RE ON SPIT-TWELVES NOW, LIEF. SEVENTY M.P.H. FASTER THAN THE OLD FIVES, AND ANOTHER THREE THOUSAND FEET CEILING.

SOUNDS GOOD!



THE DAILY SORTIES OVER ENEMY TERRITORY GOT EVER MORE NUMEROUS AS THE SUMMER WORE ON. BRUCE VINING USUALLY LED THE SQUADRON ON THESE. HE WAS EFFICIENT BUT NOT REALLY POPULAR.



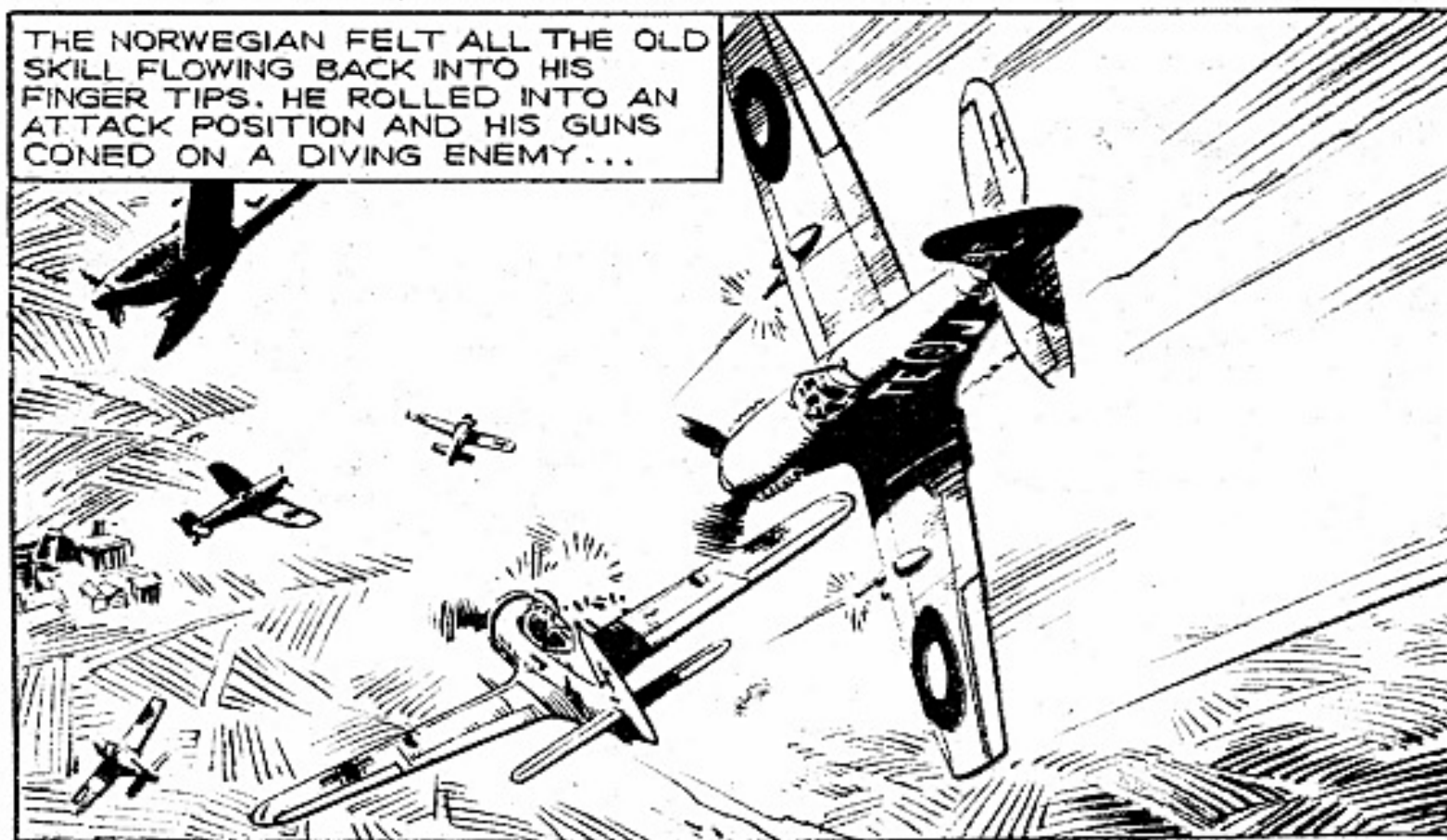
FROM TIME TO TIME, LIEF KARLSEN'S CALCULATING EYE WOULD SHIFT FROM THE BOUNCING WAVES TO THE FIGURE CROUCHED IN THE COCKPIT OF THE LEADING PLANE...

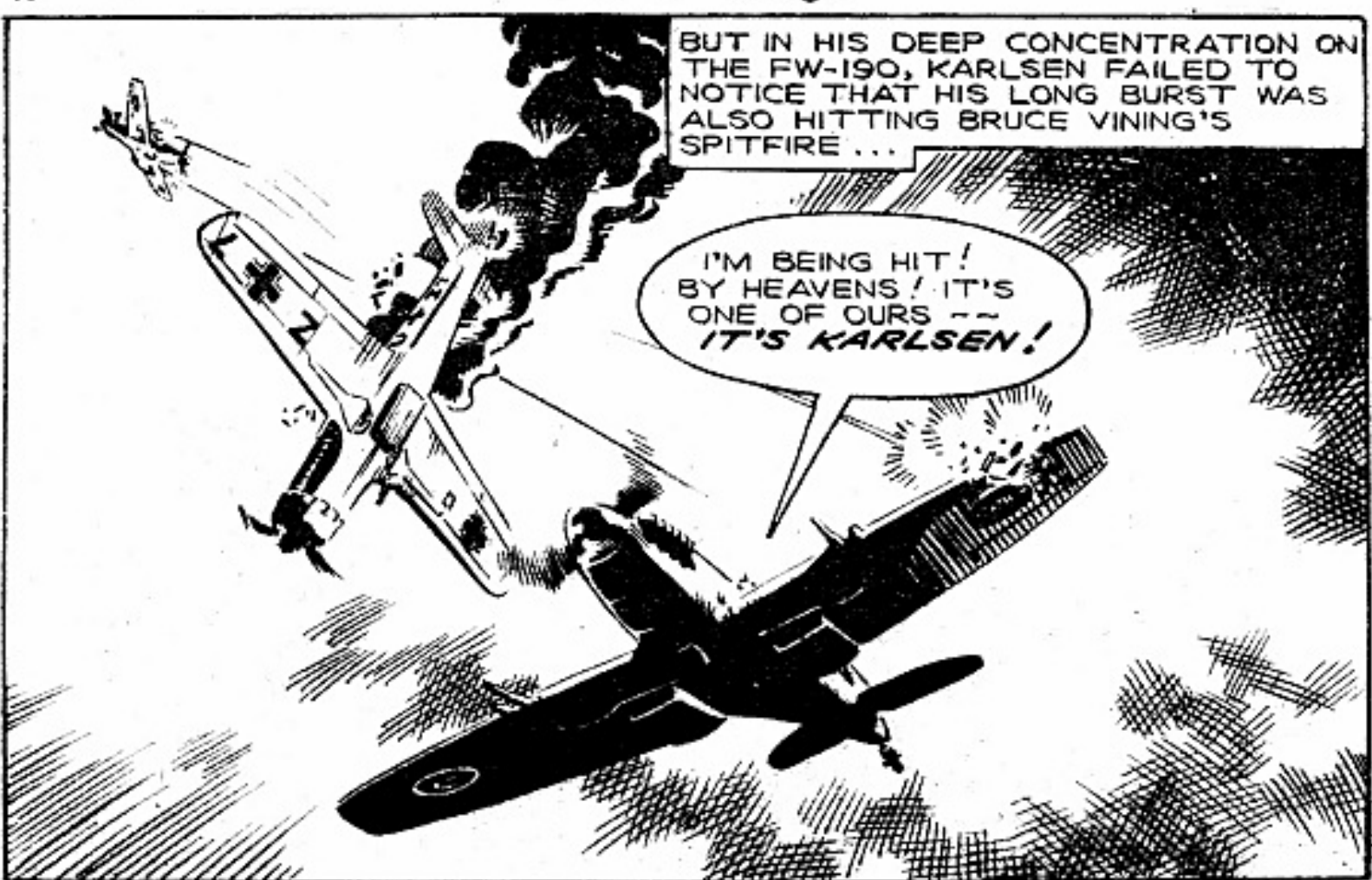
IF ONLY I COULD FIND A WAY TO PROVE FATHER INNOCENT OF THAT AIRSHIP DISASTER, I'D CHOKE VINING WITH HIS OWN WORDS!

ON THIS OCCASION THEY RAN INTO A LARGE FORMATION OF ENEMY FIGHTERS AND THE COMPLICATED PATTERN OF VAPOUR TRAILS CRISS-CROSSED THE SKY. KARLSEN THRILLED TO THE POWERFUL SURGE OF HIS NEW 2000 HORSE-POWER ENGINE.



THE NORWEGIAN FELT ALL THE OLD SKILL FLOWING BACK INTO HIS FINGER TIPS. HE ROLLED INTO AN ATTACK POSITION AND HIS GUNS CONED ON A DIVING ENEMY...

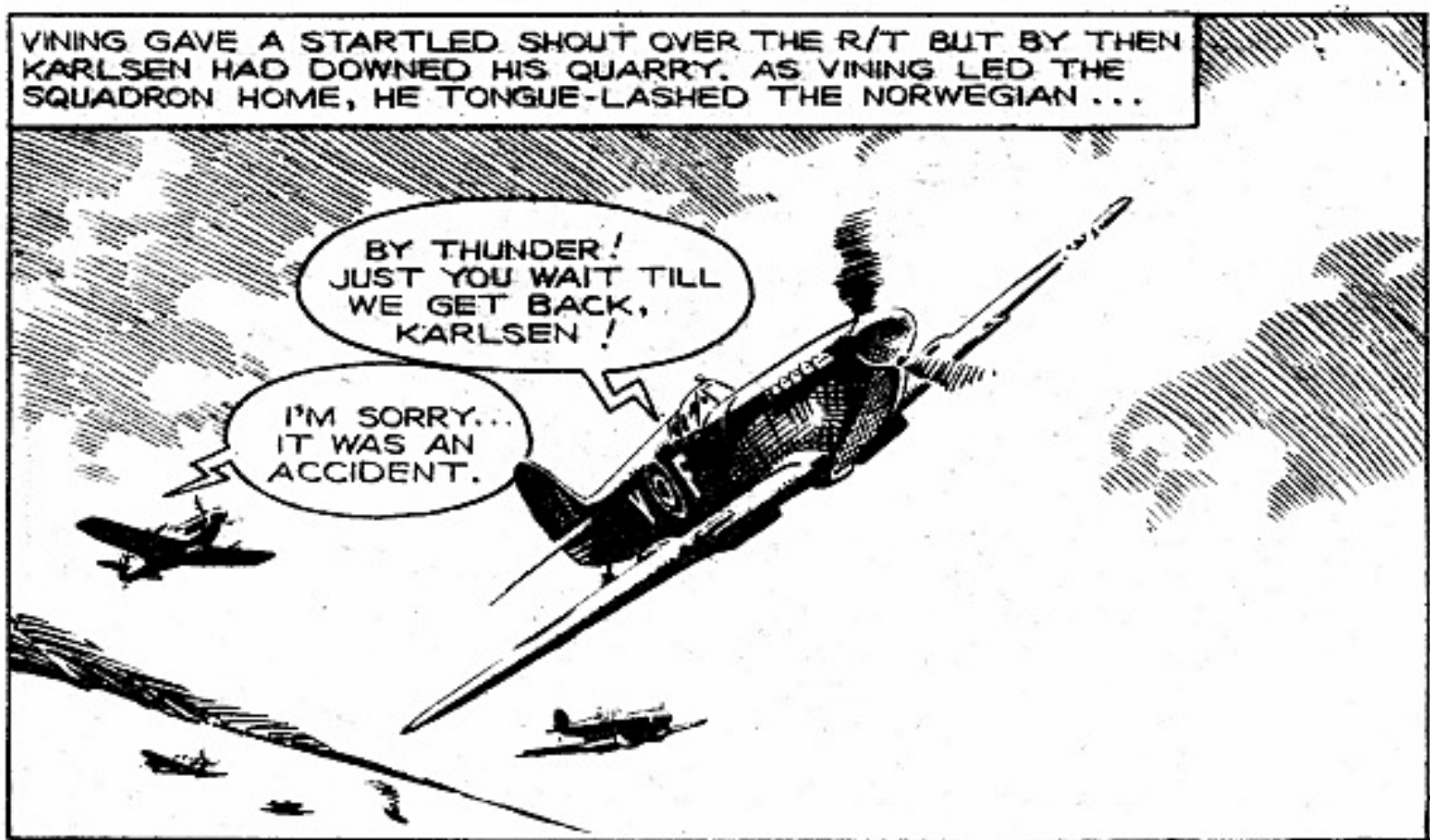




BUT IN HIS DEEP CONCENTRATION ON THE FW-190, KARLSEN FAILED TO NOTICE THAT HIS LONG BURST WAS ALSO HITTING BRUCE VINING'S SPITFIRE ...

I'M BEING HIT!  
BY HEAVENS! IT'S  
ONE OF OURS --  
*IT'S KARLSEN!*

VINING GAVE A STARTLED SHOUT OVER THE R/T BUT BY THEN KARLSEN HAD DOWNED HIS QUARRY. AS VINING LED THE SQUADRON HOME, HE TONGUE-LASHED THE NORWEGIAN ...



BY THUNDER!  
JUST YOU WAIT TILL  
WE GET BACK,  
KARLSEN!

I'M SORRY...  
IT WAS AN  
ACCIDENT.



ONCE ON THE GROUND, THE OUTRAGED VINING CONTINUED HIS ACCUSATIONS...

LOOK AT THAT! YOU CAN'T KID ME THAT WASN'T INTENTIONAL!

INTENTIONAL? YOU MUST BE CRAZY!

VINING WAS SHAKING WITH WHITE-FACED FURY...

YOU TRIED TO KILL ME ~~~ DELIBERATELY! I SHALL TAKE THIS MATTER FURTHER, KARLSEN!



AT GROUP HEADQUARTERS, AIR VICE-MARSHAL BRANDSEN HEARD VINING'S HEATED ACCUSATION OF THE NORWEGIAN PILOT WITHOUT COMMENT.

KARLSEN HAD ALREADY THREATENED ME, SIR. DICKSON, OUR STATION ADJUTANT, WILL BEAR ME OUT IN THAT.

VERY WELL, VINING. I'LL SEE DICKSON NOW.



THE UNHAPPY STATION ADJUTANT HAD BEEN BROUGHT ALONG AT BRUCE VINING'S INSISTENCE ...

ISN'T THIS WHOLE THING RATHER SILLY, DICKSON?

I'M SURE OF IT, SIR. SQUADRON LEADER KARLSEN WOULD NEVER DO SUCH A THING ON PURPOSE.



THEN THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL HAD LIEF KARLSEN IN FOR A LONG TALK. BUT HE FAILED TO PENETRATE THE NORWEGIAN'S POLITE RESERVE.

CLEARLY YOU AND VINING DON'T GET ON. ONE OF YOU WILL HAVE TO GO. I'M AFRAID IT'S YOU, KARLSEN, MUCH AS I REGRET IT.

I UNDERSTAND, SIR.



AS LIEF KARLSEN SADLY TOOK HIS LEAVE OF WIDDENHALL, THE SHARP-TONGUED BRUCE VINING COULD NOT RESIST A PARTING SHOT ...

BAD LUCK RUNS IN SOME FAMILIES, KARLSEN...

IT'S NOT BAD LUCK WITH THE KARLSSENS -- JUST THE BAD JUDGMENT OF OTHERS. SOMEDAY, SOMEHOW, YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE WILL HAVE TO ADMIT THAT MY FATHER WAS INNOCENT.



# Chapter 4. *Gross Trails*

SUMMONED TO THE AIR MINISTRY IN LONDON, KARLSEN FELT IN NO MOOD FOR THE CHEERY OFFICER IN CHARGE OF POSTINGS. AT LAST THEY REACHED THE SUBJECT IN HAND.

...SO, MY DEAR CHAP, WE'RE GIVING YOU SOMETHING NEW. YOU'RE TO COMMAND A TYPHOON SQUADRON. EXCITING STUFF -- GROUND STRAFING, DIVE-BOMBING AND ALL THAT...



THE AIR COMMODORE PAUSED FOR KARLSEN'S REACTION BUT GOT NO MORE THAN POLITE ATTENTION. SOMEWHAT DEFLATED, HE MOVED TO A WALL MAP...

THERE YOU ARE, R.A.F. THORNDOWN, IN HAMPSHIRE. IT'S ALL YOURS.

THANK YOU, SIR.



AS KARLSEN WAS LEAVING THE AIR MINISTRY, HE STOPPED SHORT AT THE SIGHT OF AN ALL-TOO FAMILIAR NAME ON THE GLASS PANEL OF A DOOR.

AIR MARSHAL  
SIR HUBERT VINING  
D.S.O. A.F.C.

AIR MARSHAL  
VINING! THAT  
MUST BE BRUCE  
VINING'S FATHER!



ON IMPULSE, KARLSEN KNOCKED. COMMANDED TO ENTER, HE WAS GREETED CURTLY BY THE SENIOR OFFICER WHO WORE DARK GLASSES AND WHOSE FACE WAS HEAVILY SCARRED. WHEN KARLSEN INTRODUCED HIMSELF, THE REPLY WAS SHORT AND UNCOMPROMISING ...

THE D-FORTY-FOUR PERISHED AND THERE'S NO SENSE IN RAKING IT OVER.

BUT THEY BLAMED MY FATHER, SIR. CAN YOU HELP ME TO PROVE HIM INNOCENT?

THE AIR MARSHAL MOVED IMPATIENTLY...

I WAS TOO INJURED TO GIVE EVIDENCE. I SIMPLY KNEW THE RESULT--YOUR FATHER WAS FOUND CRIMINALLY NEGLIGENT!

BUT IT'S NOT TRUE, SIR! HE PLEADED FOR A FINAL CHECK-OVER, BUT HE WAS REFUSED. MAYBE YOU REMEMBER THAT, SIR?

WITH ALMOST A SNARL, THE AIR MARSHAL GESTURED TOWARDS HIS SCARRED FACE.

REMEMBER P  
I REMEMBER NOTHING  
BUT THESE BURNS! NO  
WONDER BRUCE, MY SON,  
HATES THE VERY SOUND  
OF THE NAME KARLSEN!

WITH THIS FIERCE  
DENUNCIATION  
BURNING HIS EARS,  
LIEF KARLSEN  
WITHDREW.

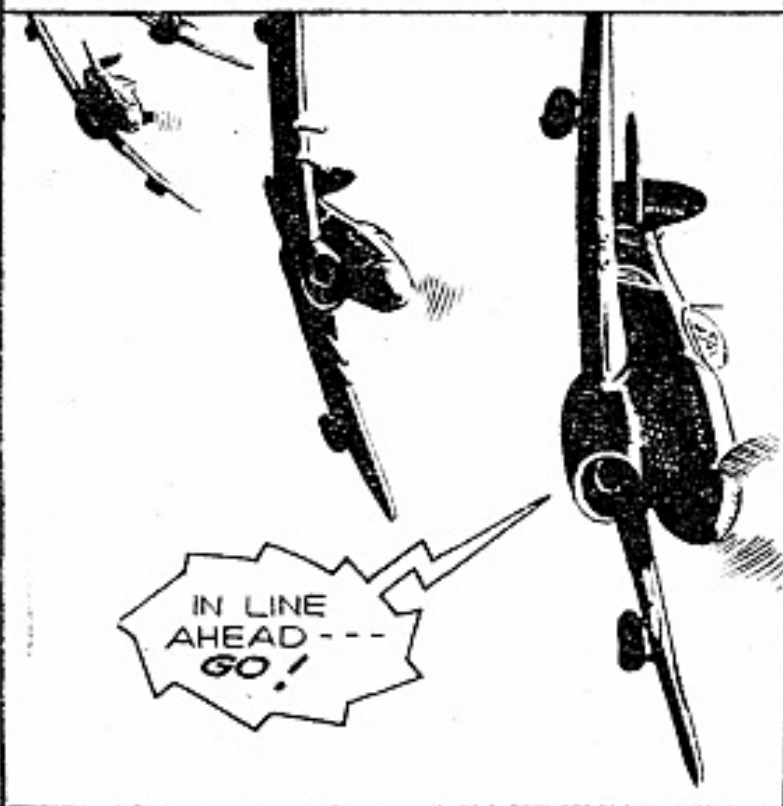
THE ENSUING WEEKS OF HIS NEW COMMAND AT R.A.F. THORNDOWN, THOUGH FULL OF COLOUR, FAILED TO ROUSE SQUADRON LEADER LIEF KARLSEN FROM THE BLACK MOOD INTO WHICH FATE HAD FLUNG HIM.

ALL FLIGHTS  
READY FOR  
TAKE-OFF,  
SIR.

RIGHT.  
NORMAL  
PRACTICE  
PROCEDURE.



ORDERS HAD COME THROUGH TO DISCARD THE TYPHOON'S ROCKETS IN FAVOUR OF DIVE-BOMBING. ARMED WITH CANISTERS OF CHALK-POWDER FOR BOMBS, THEY FOLLOWED KARLSEN IN MODEL ATTACKS ...




THE CHALK-FILLED CANISTERS WERE THE NORWEGIAN'S IDEA. BURSTING ON GORSELAND MADE BLACK BY FIRE, THEY GAVE AN ACCURATE INDICATION OF MARKSMANSHIP.



A WEEK LATER, THE CHALK CANISTERS WERE REPLACED BY THE REAL THING -- 500 lb. BOMBS. A RUSTLE OF EXCITEMENT WENT THROUGH THE BRIEFING ROOM AS KARLSEN STOOD UP TO SPEAK ...


TONIGHT, LANCASTER BOMBERS ARE MAKING THE LONG TRIP TO MILAN AND TURIN. BY THE TIME THEY'RE BACK OVER FRANCE IT'LL BE DAWN -- AND THEY'LL BE AT THE MERCY OF JERRY FIGHTERS.





...TO PREVENT THIS,  
OUR OWN FIGHTERS ARE  
CARRYING OUT DAWN  
ATTACKS ON GERMAN  
AIRFIELDS -- DIVE-BOMBING  
AND GROUND STRAFING.  
THE AIRFIELD SELECTED  
FOR US LIES JUST BEHIND  
CHERSBOURG. NOW THE  
DETAILS ...

UNDER THEIR C.O.'S WATCHFUL EYE, THE SQUADRON SPENT THE REST OF THE DAY IN PREPARATION, CHECKING AND RE-CHECKING. THEN AT DUSK THE ROAR OF SPITFIRES FILLED THE AIR. KARLSEN STARED...



GOOD HEAVENS!  
THOSE ARE THE  
SPITS FROM MY  
OLD SQUADRON!

AS THE LEADING SPITFIRE ROLLED TO A HALT, KARLSEN FOUND HIMSELF ONCE MORE FACE TO FACE WITH BRUCE VINING.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, VINING?

WE'RE TO GIVE YOU TOP COVER TOMORROW. WE STAY THE NIGHT.

A SARDONIC SMILE FLICKERED OVER VINING'S LIPS AS HE WENT ON...

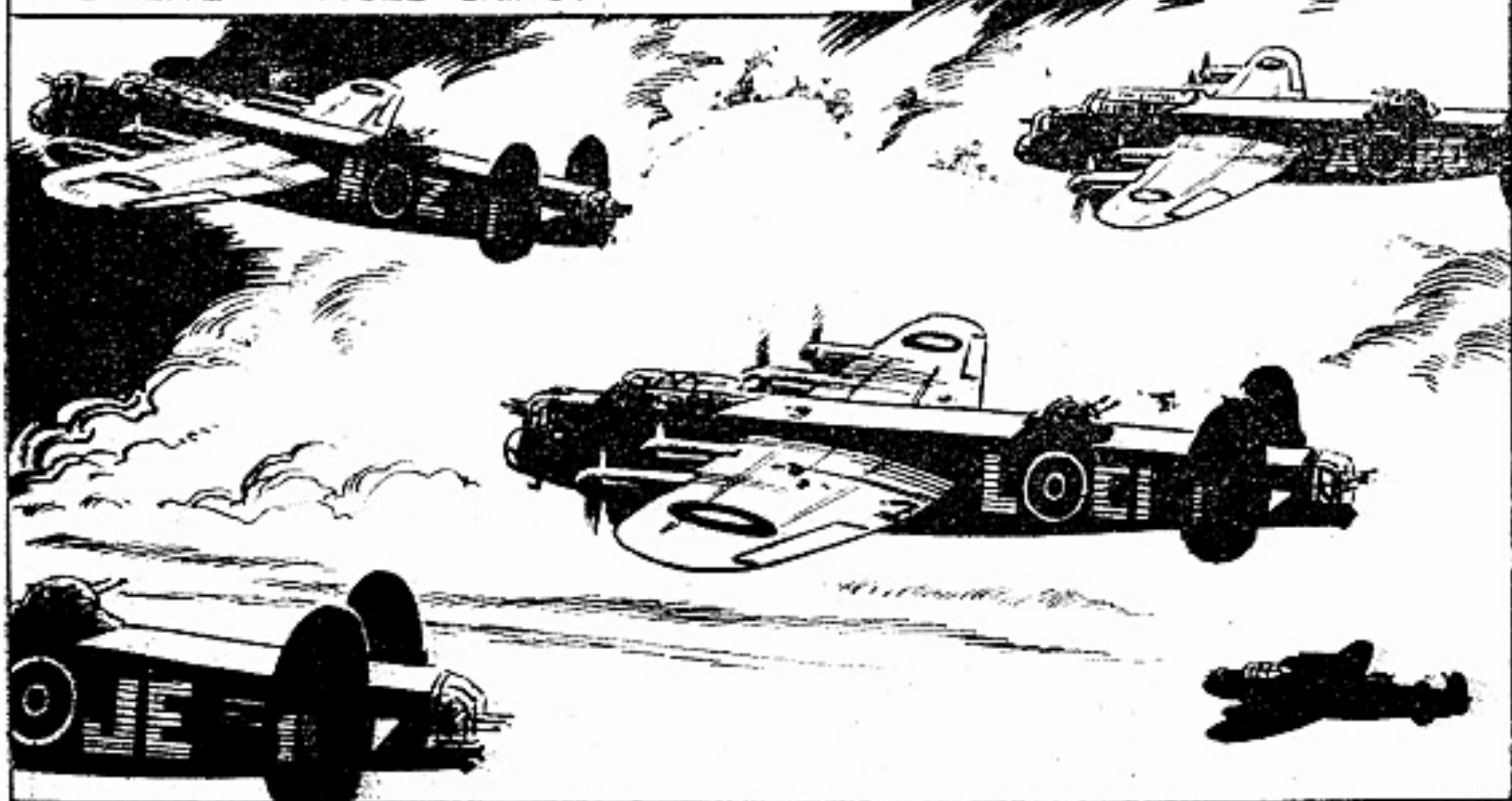
I HOPE I CAN TRUST YOUR AIM WITH BOMBS MORE THAN I COULD WITH BULLETS!

MAYBE YOU'D BETTER STEER CLEAR OF ME IN ANY CASE!

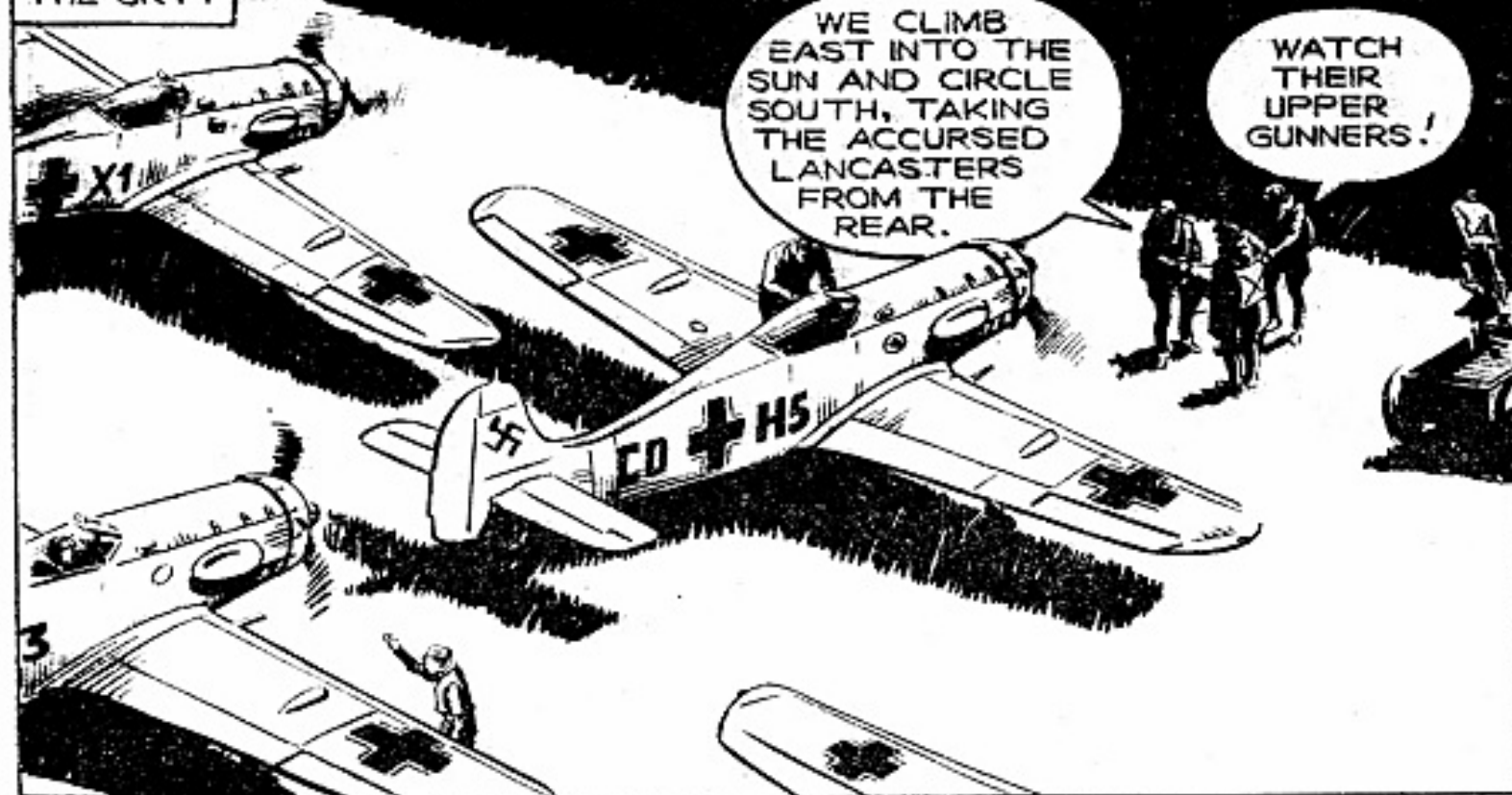


THAT NIGHT, THE LANCASTERS THUNDERED OUT ON THEIR LONG-RANGE MISSION BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL FIRST LIGHT THAT THE TYPHOONS AND SPITFIRES TOOK OFF.

FAR TO THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, THE LANCASTERS WERE HEADING FOR HOME WITH EVERY BEAT OF THEIR POWERFUL MOTORS RACING AGAINST THE GROWING LIGHT AND THE PERIL IT WOULD BRING.



ON GERMAN FIGHTER AIRFIELDS, THE WARMING-UP DIN OF SLEEK FW-190s HERALDED THE ENEMY'S EFFORT TO TEAR THE GALLANT RAIDERS FROM THE SKY.



BUT EVEN AS THE GERMAN PILOTS TURNED TOWARDS THEIR PLANES, LIEF KARLSEN'S TYPHOONS SCREAMED DOWN UPON THE ENEMY BASE.

ACHTUNG!  
TYPHOONS!



KARLSEN'S TWO 500 lb. BOMBS, DEAD ON TARGET, SET THE PATTERN FOR WHAT WAS TO FOLLOW.



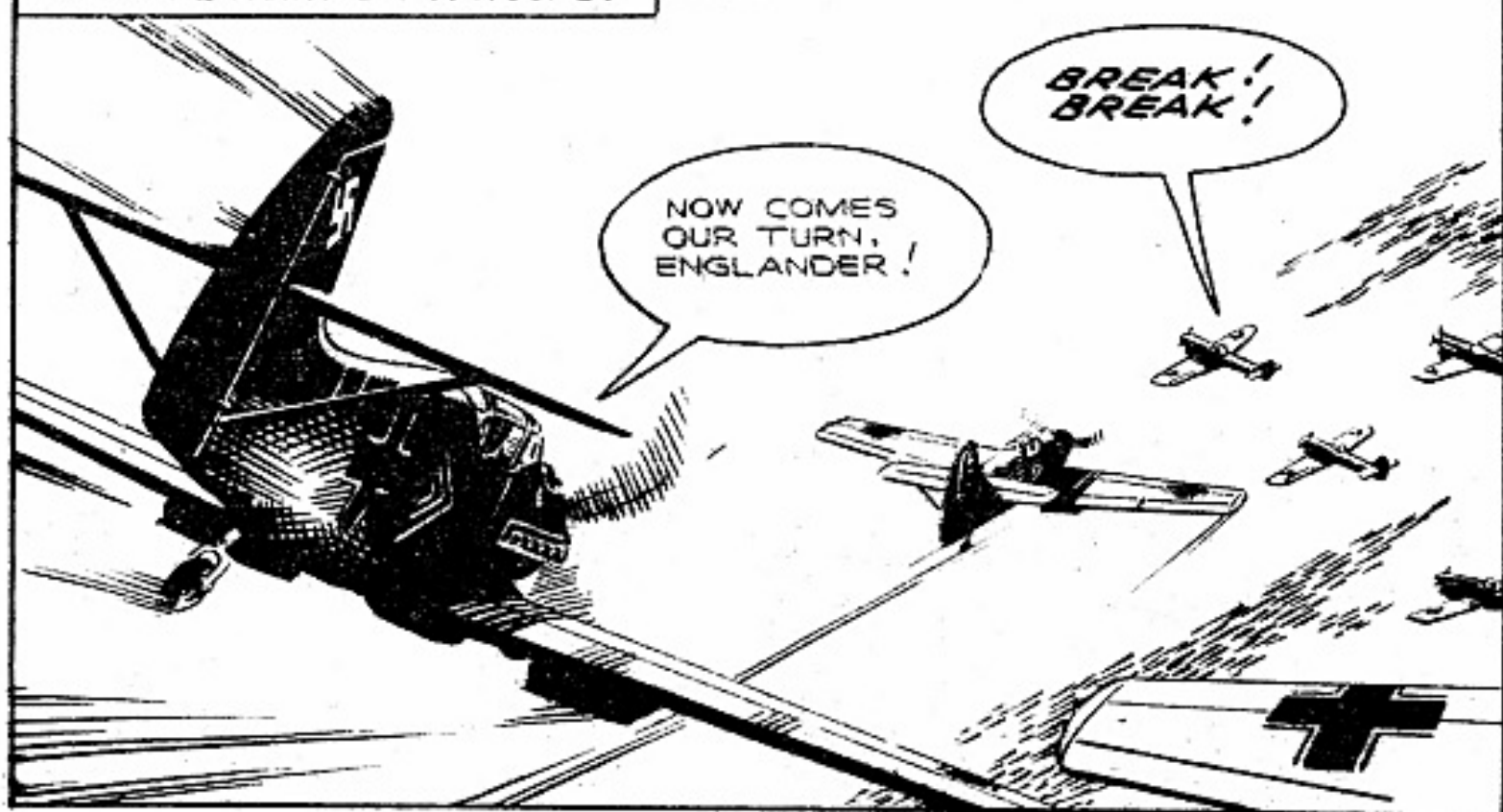
ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE TYPHOON SQUADRON SWEEPED IN, BOMBED AND ZOOMED AWAY, LEAVING A TRAIL OF DEVASTATION IN THEIR WAKE.



IN A FEW BRIEF MOMENTS, THE FEARFUL WORK WAS DONE. THEN THE ROAR OF THE DEPARTING ATTACKERS BECAME DROWNED IN THE VICIOUS CRACKLE OF FLAMES, THE STACCATO RATTLE OF EXPLODING AMMUNITION.



OTHER GERMAN FIGHTERS, HURRIEDLY CALLED FROM OTHER BASES, BEGAN TO INTERCEPT THE FORCE AND A RUNNING FIGHT DEVELOPED OVER THE CHANNEL. SLICING THROUGH VINING'S UMBRELLA OF SPITFIRES, FOUR ME-109s FELL UPON THE HOMING TYPHOONS.



BUT QUICK AS KARLSEN ACTED, HE FELT THE DULL THUD OF CANNON SHELLS SLAMMING INTO HIS AIRCRAFT. SUDDENLY, FLAMES LICKED BACK FROM THE ENGINE COWLING...



PITCHING HEADLONG INTO SPACE, KARLSEN HEARD THE WELCOME WHIPCRACK OF HIS OPENING PARACHUTE. IT SEEMED ONLY SECONDS BEFORE HE WAS DRIFTING DOWN INTO THE CHOPPY SEA.



HE PLUNGED BENEATH THE WAVES BEFORE HE COULD FREE HIMSELF FROM HIS 'CHUTE. FIGHTING FOR BREATH, HE FOUGHT HIS WAY TO THE SURFACE-- AND AS HE DID SO, HEARD A FAINT, DESPAIRING CRY...

HELLO, I'VE GOT COMPANY-- AND HE'S IN TROUBLE.

HELP -  
HELP!



A FEW POWERFUL STROKES BROUGHT KARLSEN WITHIN REACH OF THE OTHER PILOT, WHOM HE RECOGNISED WITH A GASP OF SURPRISE.

VINING!  
SO IT'S  
YOU!

QUICKLY! I'M  
SINKING!



KARLSEN GRABBED THE DROWNING MAN UNDER THE ARMPITS. VINING'S LIFE JACKET WAS RIPPED AND USELESS. PRESENTLY, HE WENT LIMP...

LET'S HOPE  
SOMEBODY SAW  
US DITCH-- IT'S  
OUR ONLY HOPE!



THE IMMEDIATE ANXIETY DROVE ALL ELSE FROM LIEF KARLSEN'S MIND. EVEN THE STRANGE IRONY THAT OF ALL PEOPLE HE SHOULD SNATCH FROM DEATH IT SHOULD BE HIS BITTEREST ENEMY. EVEN THE GIANT NORWEGIAN WAS CLOSE TO EXHAUSTION BY THE TIME RESCUE CAME, HOWEVER.



BUT BEFORE THE AIR-SEA RESCUE LAUNCH REACHED THE FLIERS, A STRAY ENEMY FIGHTER POUNCED UPON THE SLOWING VESSEL, RAKING IT WITH CANNON AND MACHINE-GUN FIRE.



FLAMES WERE LICKING UP FROM THE LAUNCH'S CABIN AS THE MESSERSCHMITT ZOOMED INTO THE BLUE. THE DAZED RESCUE CREW WERE SPURRED INTO ACTION TO SAVE THE BOAT BY THEIR SKIPPER, THE AIRMEN IN THE WATER FORGOTTEN IN THE EMERGENCY.



SEEING WHAT HAD HAPPENED, KARLSEN STRUCK OUT WEAKLY FOR THE LAUNCH, IF HIS NUMBED FINGERS SLIPPED, VINING WOULD SLIDE FOR EVER BENEATH THE WAVES.



KARLSEN WAS AT HIS LAST GASP WHEN HE AND VINING WERE DRAGGED ABOARD THE RESCUE LAUNCH, WHERE THE FIRE WAS AT LAST UNDER CONTROL.



THE LAUNCH COMMANDER CAME UP TO THE NORWEGIAN...

SORRY TO LEAVE YOU TO RESCUE YOURSELVES. IF WE HADN'T DOUSED THAT FIRE WE'D HAVE ALL HAD TO SWIM HOME.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, SKIPPER. YOU WERE HERE, THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERED.



WHEN KARLSEN KNELT BESIDE THE REVIVING BRUCE VINING, HE WAS STARTLED TO SEE A HALF-APOLOGETIC GRIN ON THE OTHER'S FACE.



WELL HERE'S A RUM GO--YOU SAVING ME! TH - THANKS, KARLSEN.

GLAD TO DO IT, VINING.

SUDDENLY, LIEF KARLSEN FELT A LIFTING OF SPIRIT AS IF ALL OLD ENMITIES HAD BEEN BANISHED.

A FEW DAYS LATER, THE NORWEGIAN RECEIVED A MESSAGE ASKING HIM TO VISIT BRUCE VINING AT THE HOSPITAL WHERE HE WAS RECOVERING FROM HIS ORDEAL.

FATHER'S HEARD OF WHAT YOU DID FOR ME, LIEF. HE WANTS TO SEE YOU.

OKAY, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.

LATER THAT DAY, KARLSEN PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE SIR HUBERT VINING. REMEMBERING THEIR LAST PAINFUL MEETING, THE BIG NORWEGIAN EXPECTED A FATHER'S FORMAL THANKS AND NOTHING MORE. BUT HE WAS WRONG ...

WORDS ARE POOR THANKS, KARLSEN. SO I'M GOING TO ACT. I AM PRESSING FOR A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE WHOLE D-FORTY-FOUR AFFAIR. I THINK I HAVE EVIDENCE THAT WILL PROVE YOUR FATHER WAS UNFAIRLY TREATED.

WHY, THAT'S - THAT'S MARVELLOUS, SIR.



SOME WEEKS LATER, KARLSEN SENT HIS TYPHOON SOARING JOYFULLY INTO THE SKY FOR ONLY THAT MORNING HE HAD RECEIVED NEWS OF THE RESULTS OF AIR MARSHAL VINING'S INVESTIGATIONS ...



... IN HIS HAPPY MIND WAS A PICTURE OF HIS FATHER, MADE SUDDENLY FREE OF A WHOLE LIFE'S BURDEN OF GUILT. A COMPLETE EXONERATION FROM BLAME IN THE D-FORTY-FOUR DISASTER.

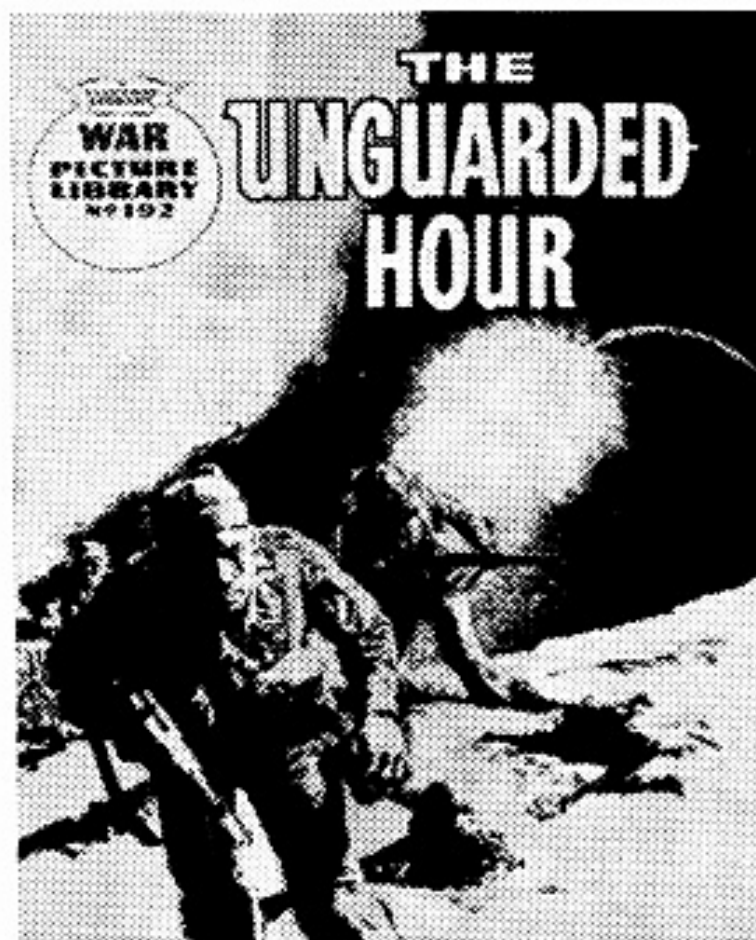
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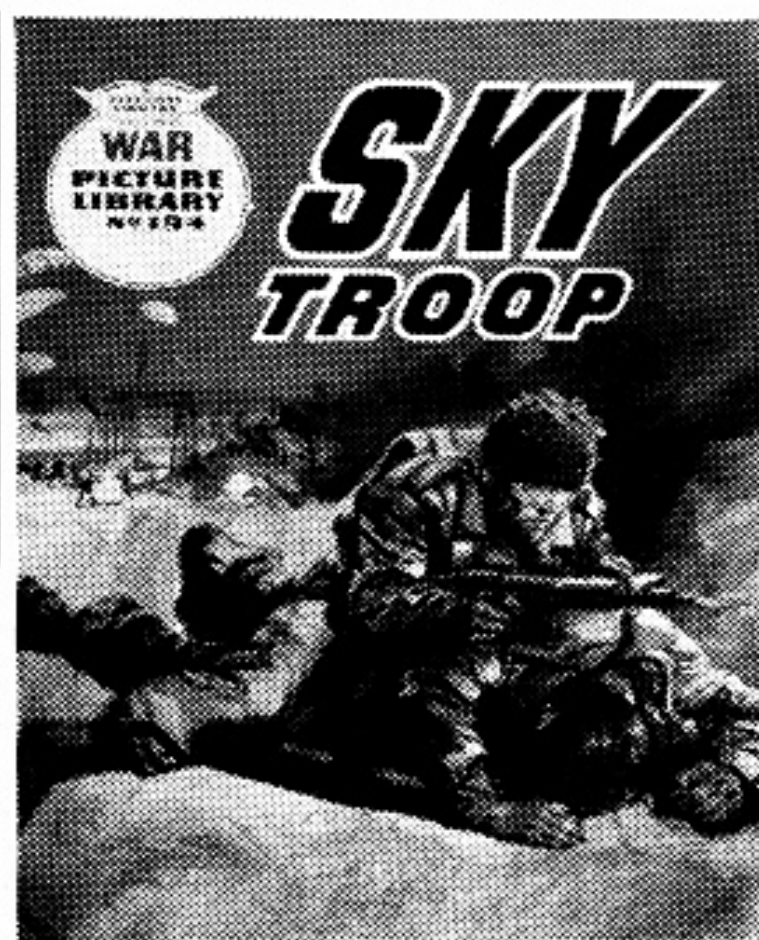
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OF YOUR BODY!**

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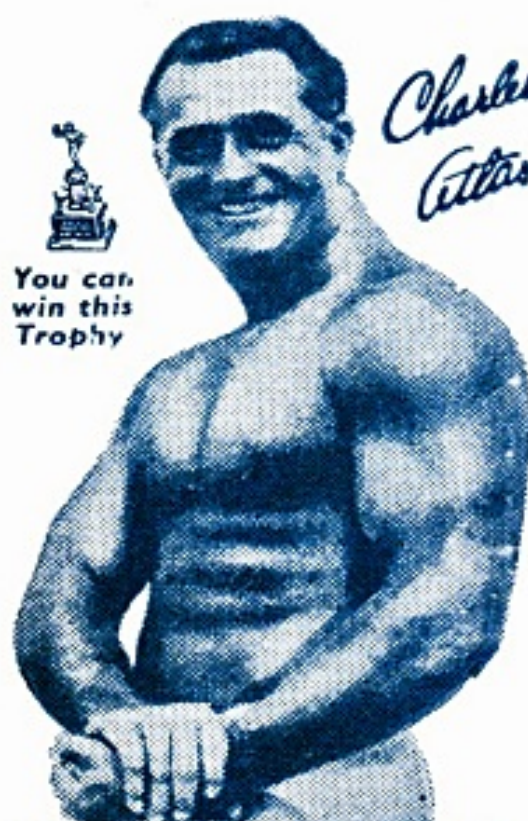
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